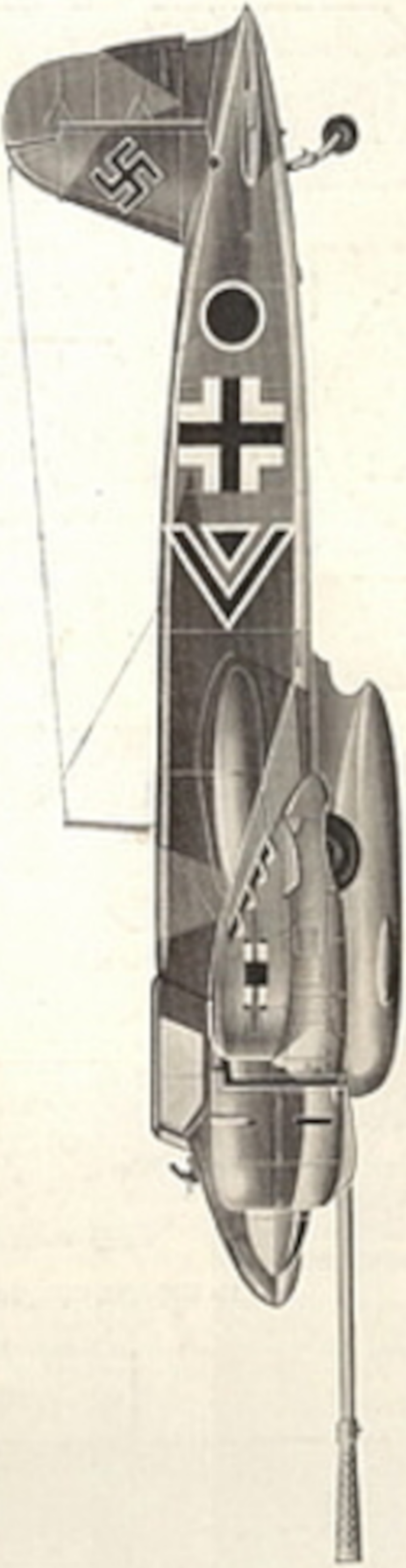
PROFILE PUBLICATIONS

The Henschel Hs 129

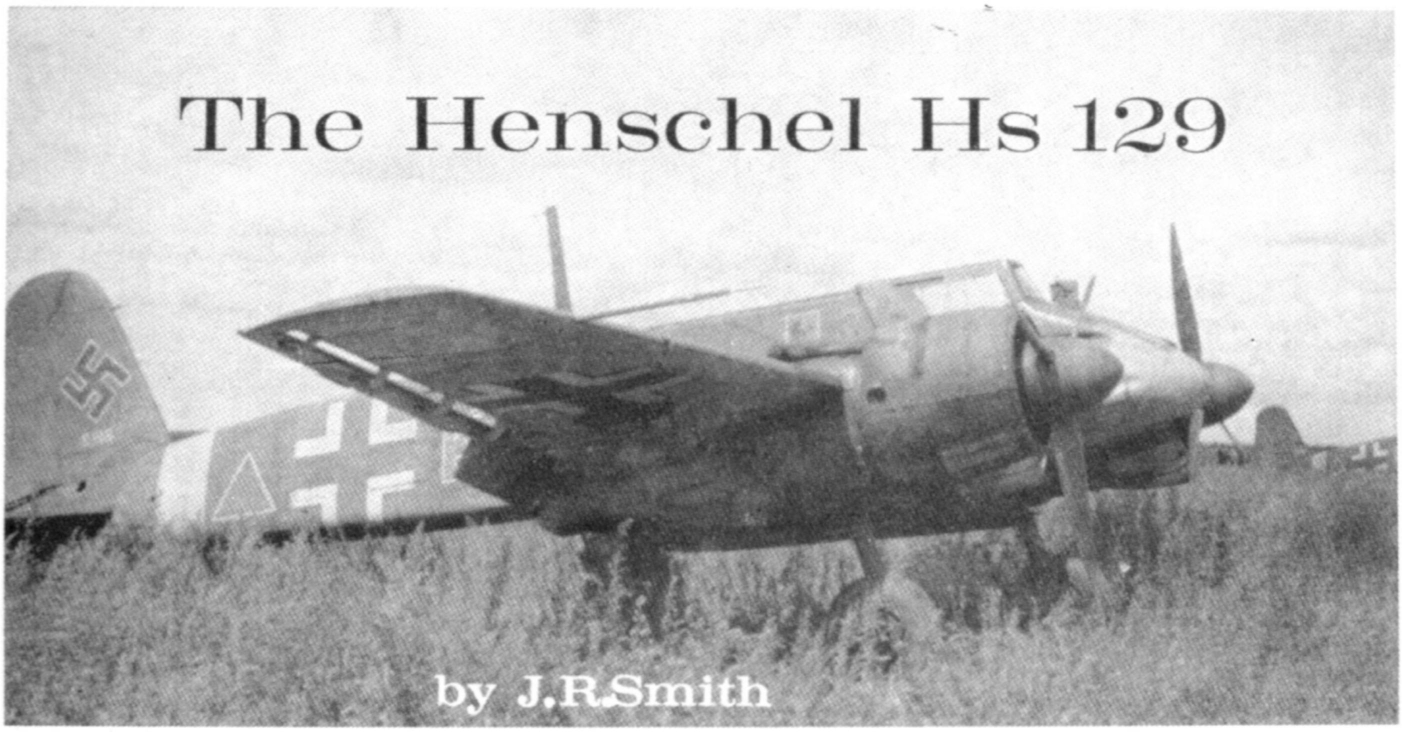
NUMBER 69

TWO SHILLINGS



The Henschel Hs 129

by J.R.Smith



The Henschel Hs 129B, although not produced in large numbers by the standards of W.W.II, formed an important part of the strength of the Luftwaffe *ground-attack units in Russia. The machine illustrated above flew with 8/Sch.G 2 during the crucial battle of Kursk in July 1943.* (Photo: R. C. Seeley collection)

THE railway locomotive manufacturing works of *Henschel und Sohn A.G.* was established at Kassel in 1848. Following a long and successful period of locomotive construction, the Director Oskar R. Henschel, decided (with the backing of the new Nazi government) to establish an aircraft manufacturing concern. This was formed on 30th March 1933 originally at Kassel, although by the end of 1934 a new main factory was opened at Schönefeld bei Berlin. Henschel's first aircraft was the single-engined, single-seat, parasol wing, sports aircraft the Hs 121, which was designed by Dipl. Ing. Koch and first flown on 4th January 1934.

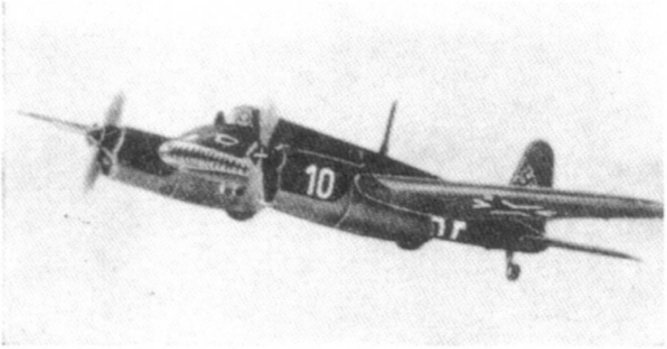
The first service machine was the Hs 122, a single-engined parasol wing reconnaissance aircraft built in small numbers for the young *Luftwaffe*. The Hs 123 biplane dive bomber paved the way for the famous Ju 87 Stuka and the Hs 124 was an experimental twin-engined *Schnellbomber* or high-speed bomber. The Hs 125 was a low-wing version of the Hs 121, and the Hs 126 was an improved version of the Hs 122 which saw widespread service with the *Luftwaffe's* short range and army-co-operation reconnaissance *Staffeln*. The little-known Hs 127 was an improved version of the Hs 124 which could out-perform the early Bf 109s, but only one prototype was built. The Hs 128 was an experimental high-altitude aircraft of which two were built and which was developed into the Hs 130. The Hs 129 is the subject of the present *Profile*, and the Hs 130 was a high-altitude reconnaissance aircraft which in its later versions could achieve 50,000 ft. Last Henschel aircraft design to receive an R.L.M. designation was the Hs 132 jet-propelled dive bomber somewhat similar in appearance to the He 162 *Salamander*.

In another slightly different field the name of Henschel was also to become famous. At the end of the war, they were the largest manufacturers of guided missiles in Germany. The chief designer of this complex was Prof. Dr. Herbert Wagner, whose Hs 117 *Schmetterling* and Hs 293, although not particularly successful, were the first in their field. Henschels were also responsible for sub-contracting such famous aircraft as the Junkers Ju 88, not to mention the construction of the piloted Fieseler Fi 103 (V-1 flying bomb) for use by 5/KG 200, the *Leonidas Staffel*.

PROTOTYPES AND PRE-PRODUCTION

Following experiments in Spain with the Henschel Hs 123 and Junkers Ju 87 dive bombers, the R.L.M. (*Reichluftfahrtministerium* or German Air Ministry) placed a specification for a single-seat, heavily armoured and armed ground-attack aircraft for destroying enemy strongpoints. The machine was to employ two small Argus As 410 twelve-cylinder air-cooled in-lines, this layout being favoured because it provided twin-engined safety; a vital factor in ground-attack aircraft where the powerplants were particularly vulnerable to anti-aircraft fire.

Two companies produced designs to compete for the specification; the *Focke Wulf Flugzeugbau*



Hs 129A-0 pre-production machine, powered by two Argus As 410 air-cooled in-lines; pilots were unanimous in their condemnation of the lack of power, the restricted pilot vision and the heavy controls of this model.

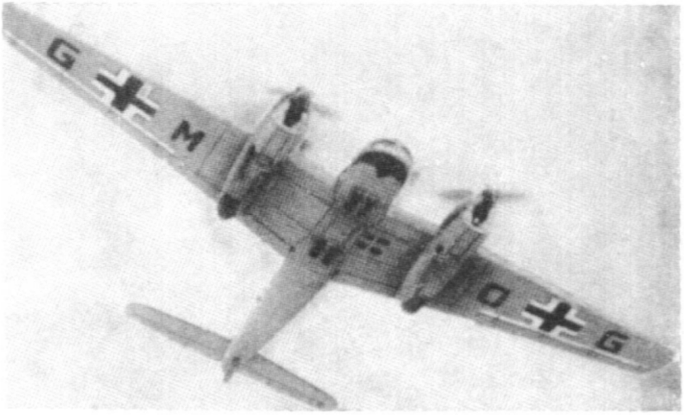
G.m.b.H. and the *Henschel Flugzeugwerke A.G.* The Focke Wulf design was in fact an extensively modified version of the Fw 189 *Uhu* reconnaissance and army co-operation aircraft. A much abbreviated crew nacelle constructed almost entirely of armour plate was fitted, and two 20-mm. MG 151/20 cannon were mounted in the wing roots. The first and only prototype of the modified *Uhu* was the Fw 189 V6, which was to have been the forerunner of the proposed Fw 189 C series. However, no production was undertaken as the contract was awarded to the Henschel design.

This was designated Hs 129, and was designed by Dipl. Ing. Friedrich Nicholaus, Henschel's chief designer, work being completed by the end of 1938. The machine was a small low-wing monoplane powered by two 465-h.p. Argus As 410 air-cooled in-line engines. One of the most notable features of the aircraft was its heavily armoured cockpit which was constructed of 6- to 12-mm. armour plates spot welded together, the total weighing some 1,000 lb. Standard built-in armament comprised two 20-mm. MG 151/20 cannon and two 7·9-mm. MG 17 machine guns, all mounted either side of the cockpit and aimed by means of a Revi C.12/C gunsight mounted just ahead of the cockpit in a large projecting fairing.

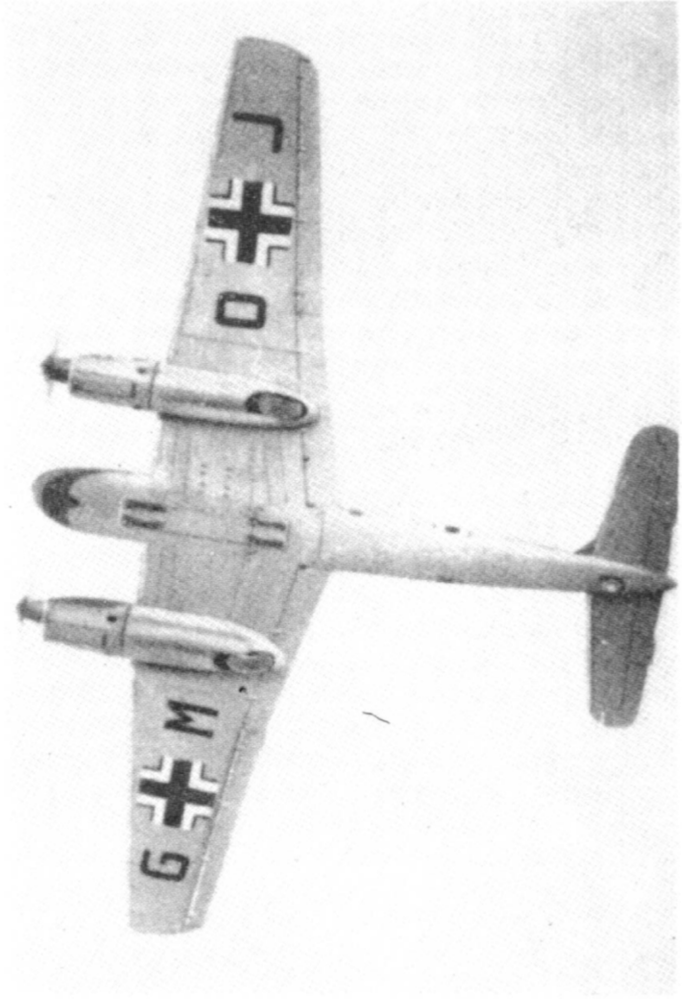
Three prototypes were ordered, the first of which, the Hs 129 V1, made its initial flight early in 1939. The Hs 129 V2 and V3 were generally similar and were followed later in the year by a small batch of Hs 129 A-0 pre-production aircraft. These machines were delivered to 5 (*Schlacht*) *Staffel* of *Lehrgeschwader* 2 for evaluation, but the reports of all who flew them were highly unfavourable. The machine was found to be underpowered, extreme force had to be used to keep it under control and the 75-mm. windscreen allowed the pilot a severely restricted forward view. The test pilots unanimously recommended that development be abandoned, but nevertheless the pre-production Hs129 A-0s were considered good enough to be delivered to the Rumanian Air Force operating on the Eastern Front and to the *Luftwaffe* training unit, 4/SG 101 based at Paris-Orly.

RE-DESIGN

Following the unfavourable reception given to the Hs 129 A series, Dipl. Ing. Nicholaus produced an entirely new design, the Henschel P/76. This project

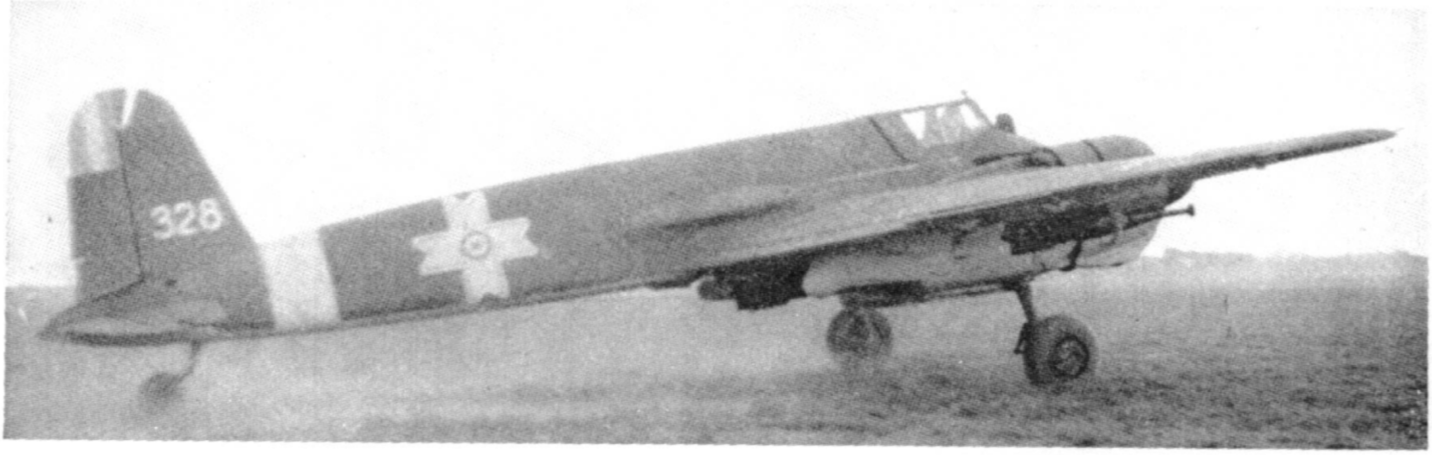


Another flying view of the Hs 129A-0 shows the fuselage bomb racks.

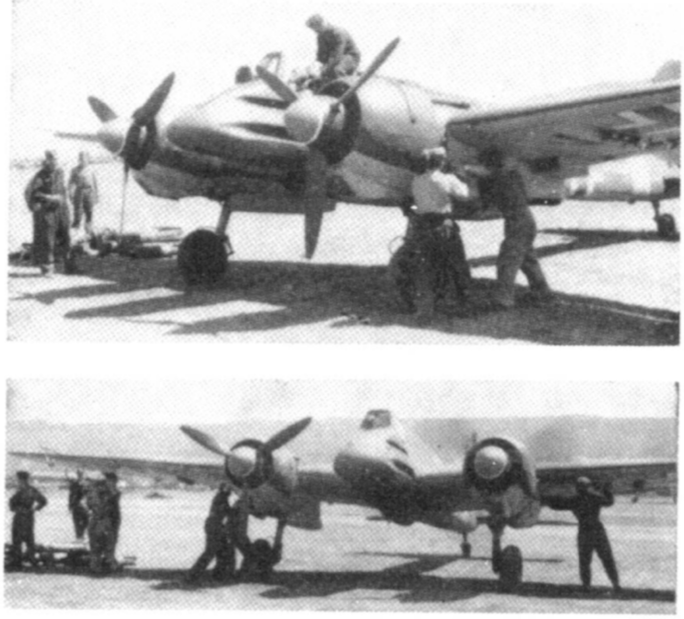


Hs 129-A-O GM + OJ with four practise bombs under forward fuselage. (Photo: E. J. Creek)

An Hs 129B-1 of the Rumanian Air Force, which operated alongside the Luftwaffe *in Russia. The Rumanians received small numbers of A-0 and B-1 models, although this latter fact has only recently been confirmed.* (Photo: R. C. Seeley collection)



Propaganda shot of the Hs 129 depicts clearly the huge size of the cannon.



An interesting sequence of illustrations showing (above) *a pilot entering an Hs 129B-2 with ventral cannon, starting the engines, and* (below) *taxiing for take-off. Note the infantry assault badge, a common decoration in some* Luftwaffe Schlachtgeschwader, *marked on both fuselage and nose, and also the tally of destroyed tanks on the rudder.* (Photos: R. C. Seeley collection)

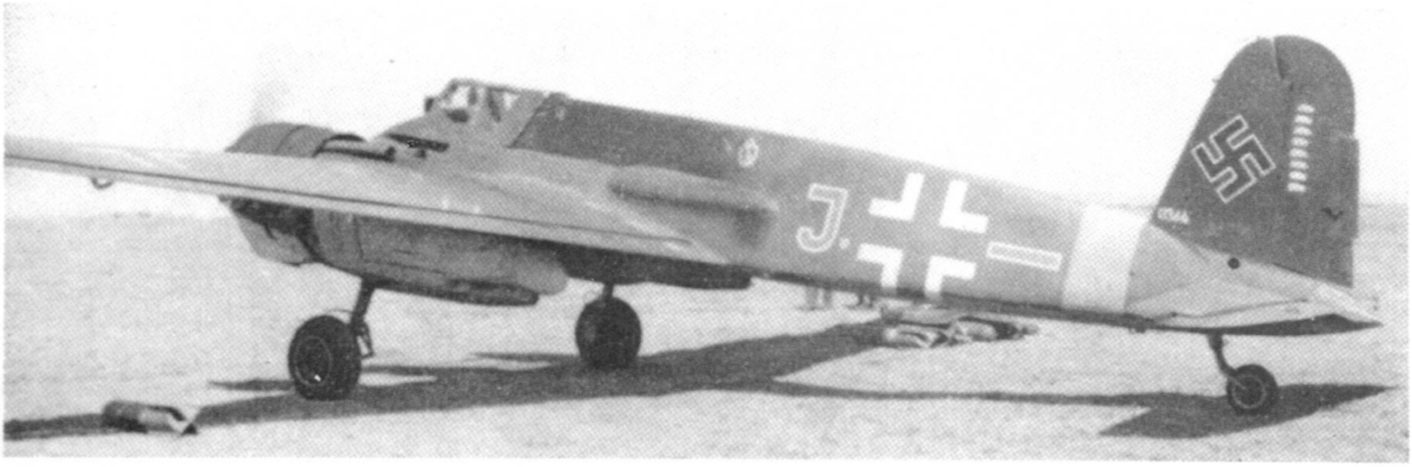
was for a slightly larger aircraft than the Hs 129 with a span of 50 ft. 10 in., a length of 33 ft. 2 in. and a height of 11 ft. 6 in. powered by more powerful engines. However, because of the urgent need for a ground-attack aircraft to equip the newly formed *Schlachtgeschwader*, the R.L.M. refused to countenance the delay that would result in the Hs P/76 being tooled-up for production. Therefore, Henschels were ordered to produce a modified version of the Hs 129 A-0 powered by captured Gnôme Rhône 14 M radial engines. It was hoped that the increase in power offered by these engines would improve the flight characteristics of the new machine which was to be designated Hs 129 B.

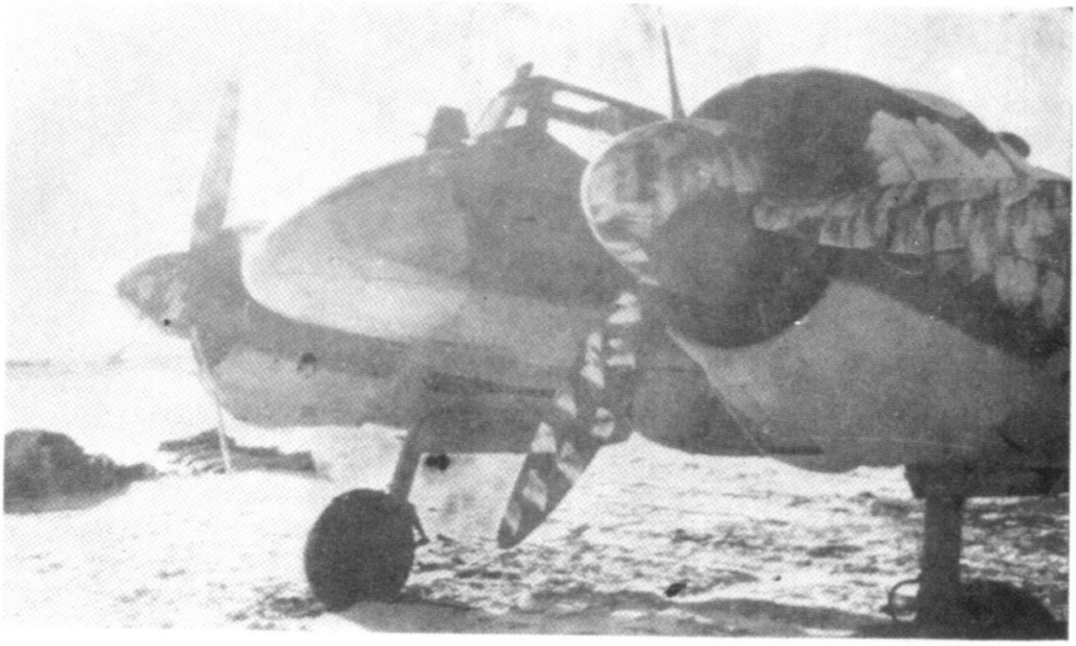
A small pre-production batch of seven Hs 129 B-0s were produced late in 1940, and the new variant proved to possess much-improved flight characteristics, although the handling still left something to be desired. Besides the installation of the new engines, the Hs 129 B-0 had a slightly enlarged cockpit canopy frame, although space inside was still so cramped that some of the instruments were positioned *outside* the aircraft on the inboard sides of the engine cowlings. The first production model, the Hs 129 B-1 was placed on the production line at Henschel's main Schönefeld plant during December 1941, and deliveries to the *Luftwaffe* began from early 1942.

During 1942, 219 B-1s were produced, and the type was modified to carry a large variety of weapons. The Hs 129 B-1/R1, in addition to two 7·9-mm. MG 17 machine-guns and two 20-mm. cannon, carried two 110-lb. SC-50 bombs or two packs each containing forty-eight 4½-lb. SD-2 anti-personnel bombs. The most widely used variant was the Hs 129 B-1/R2 which was equipped with the 30-mm. MK 101 cannon with thirty rounds in addition to the standard fixed armament. The Hs 129 B-1/R3 carried four additional 7·9-mm. MG 17 machine guns with 1,000 rounds in an open tray beneath the fuselage; the R4 could carry four SC-50s, one 550-lb. SC-250 or a pack containing ninety-six SD-2 bombs; and the Hs 129 B-1/R5 was a reconnaissance variant with an Rb 20/30 camera and reduced ammunition capacity.

HENSCHELS IN NORTH AFRICA

The first *Luftwaffe* unit to equip with the Hs 129 B-1 was 4 *Staffel* of the newly established II *Gruppe* of *Schlachtgeschwader* 1. This *Staffel* was formed at Lippstadt in North West Germany, receiving sixteen of the new Henschel ground-attack machines by 28th March 1942. After a period of working-up, 4/Sch.G. 1 transferred to the Eastern Front early in May 1942, but by then its strength had dwindled to twelve Hs 129 B-1s of which two-thirds were serviceable. The *Geschwader Stab* and both *Gruppen* of Sch.G 1 (which had been formed from the remnants of II(S)/LG 2) were placed under the command of *Luftflotte* 4 in Southern Russia, the units operating a mixed bag of Hs 123s, Hs 129s and Bf 109s. The next unit to be equipped with the Hs 129, deliveries of

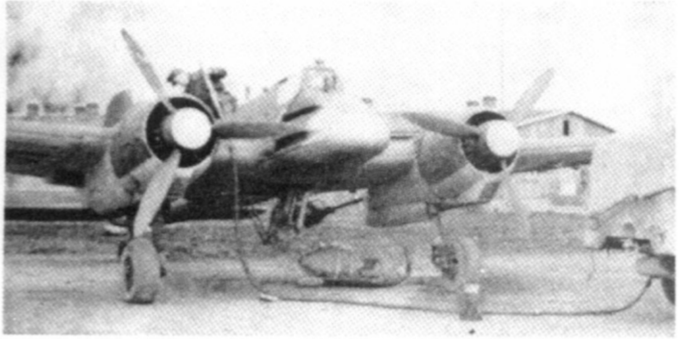




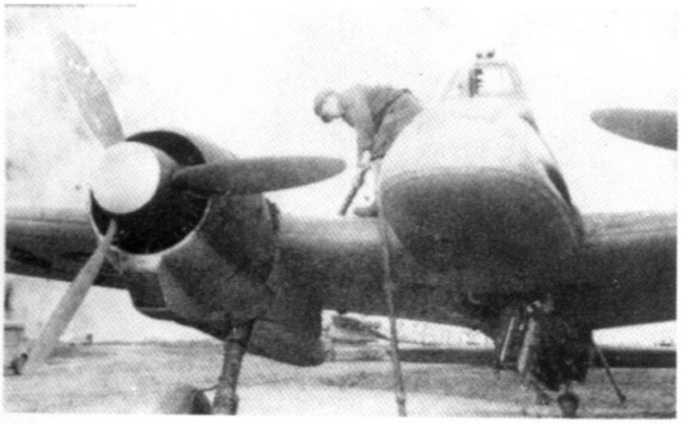
Hs 129B-2/R8 with interesting snow camouflage effect.
(Photo:
R. C. Seeley collection)

which never reached mass-production proportions, was 4 *Staffel* of I/Sch.G 2. The *Gruppe* was formed in September 1942 from the second III/ZG 1, 4 *Staffel* being established at Deblin-Irena in Poland on the 30th with a strength of twelve Hs 129s. On 10th November 1942 the unit arrived in North Africa, but by then its strength had been reduced to eight Hs 129s, half of which were serviceable.

Even at this early stage in the Henschel's career, the engine trouble which was to dog the aircraft began to manifest itself. It was found that the Gnôme Rhône engines were extremely vulnerable to dust and sand, and after only a few appearances over the Allied lines, the machines were withdrawn from service. Two of the four serviceable aircraft were captured after making crash landings, and the rest were transferred to Tripoli where attempts were made to produce a satisfactory sand-filter, but without much success. The aircraft were eventually destroyed when the Eighth Army marched into Tripoli on 23rd January 1943, and the unit, minus its aircraft, was transferred to Bari in Southern Italy for refitting, thence moving to the Russian Front.



Fuelling up an Hs 129B-2; note MK 103 cannon swung down for servicing. (Photos: R. C. Seeley collection)

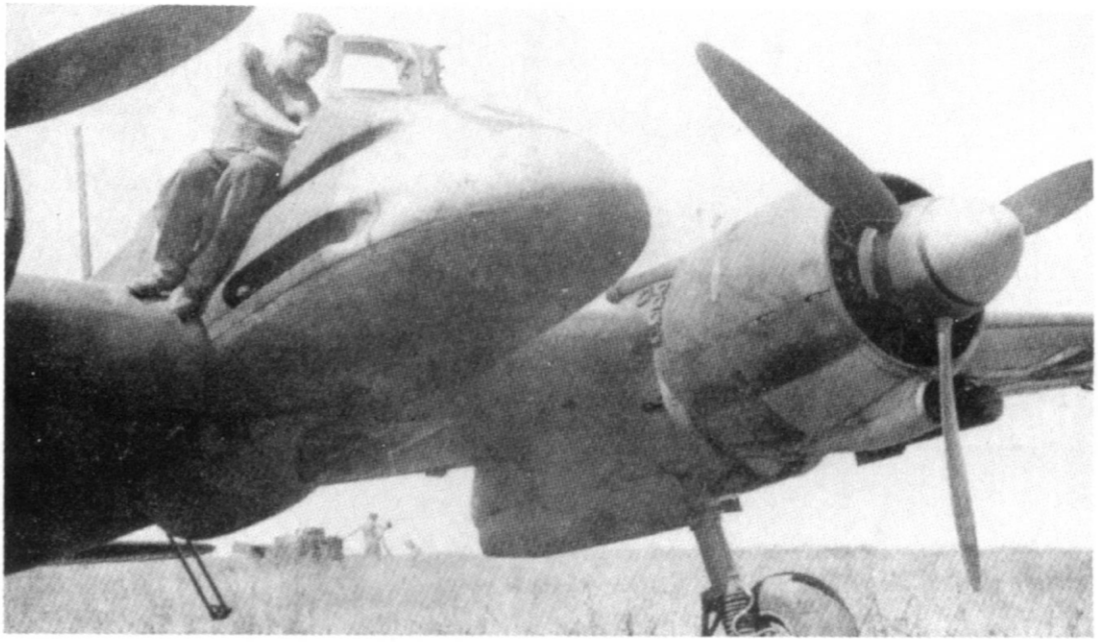


Undismayed by this débacle, a *Staffel* from II/Sch.G 2 which had recently been formed from the *Jabo Staffeln* of JG 27 and JG 53 was transferred to the Middle East in the second week of December 1942. This *Staffel*, designated 8/Sch.G 2, received seven Hs 129 Bs, and was based at Tunis-Aounnia, becoming operational early in February 1943 under *Flieger Führer Tunis*. This unit was somewhat more successful than its predecessor, but although strength rose from ten in February to sixteen in April, serviceability steadily declined. In May 1943, the *Staffel* was transferred to Decimomanu in Sardinia, operating under *Flieger Führer Sardinien*, and in July 1943 was moved to the Russian Front, joining 4/Sch.G 2 and 4 and 8/Sch.G 1. The latter unit had operated exclusively on the Eastern Front.

HENSCHELS v. THE RED ARMY

One other Hs 129 unit had been formed in September 1942 for specialised anti-tank duties, designated the *Panzer Jäger Staffel* of *Jagdgeschwader* 51 *"Mölders"*. The appearance of the Russian KV 1, KV 2 and T-34 tanks had created much surprise, and no little trepidation amongst the Germans as they had proved superior to the German Pz.Kw. III and IV tanks then in service with the *Panzer* Divisions. Consequently, all Henschel 129 *Staffeln* were concentrated against Russian armour and a special command structure known as *Führer der Panzer Jäger* was created to control the various units. Besides 4 and 8/Sch.G 1, 4 and 8/Sch.G 2 and Pz.Jäg./JG 51 with Hs 129s, other units under its command included the Ju 87 *Panzer Jäger Staffel*, 1/ZG 1 with Bf 110s and *Staffel* 92 with Ju 88 P-1s.

In early July 1943, four of the five Henschel Hs 129 *Staffeln* under the overall command of Hauptmann Bruno Meyer took part in *Unternehmen Zitadelle* (Operation Citadel). This was the code name for an all-out attack on the Kursk salient, a narrow strip of



Fitter working on the cockpit of a Henschel with ventral cannon and underwing bombs.
(Photo: R. C. Seeley collection)

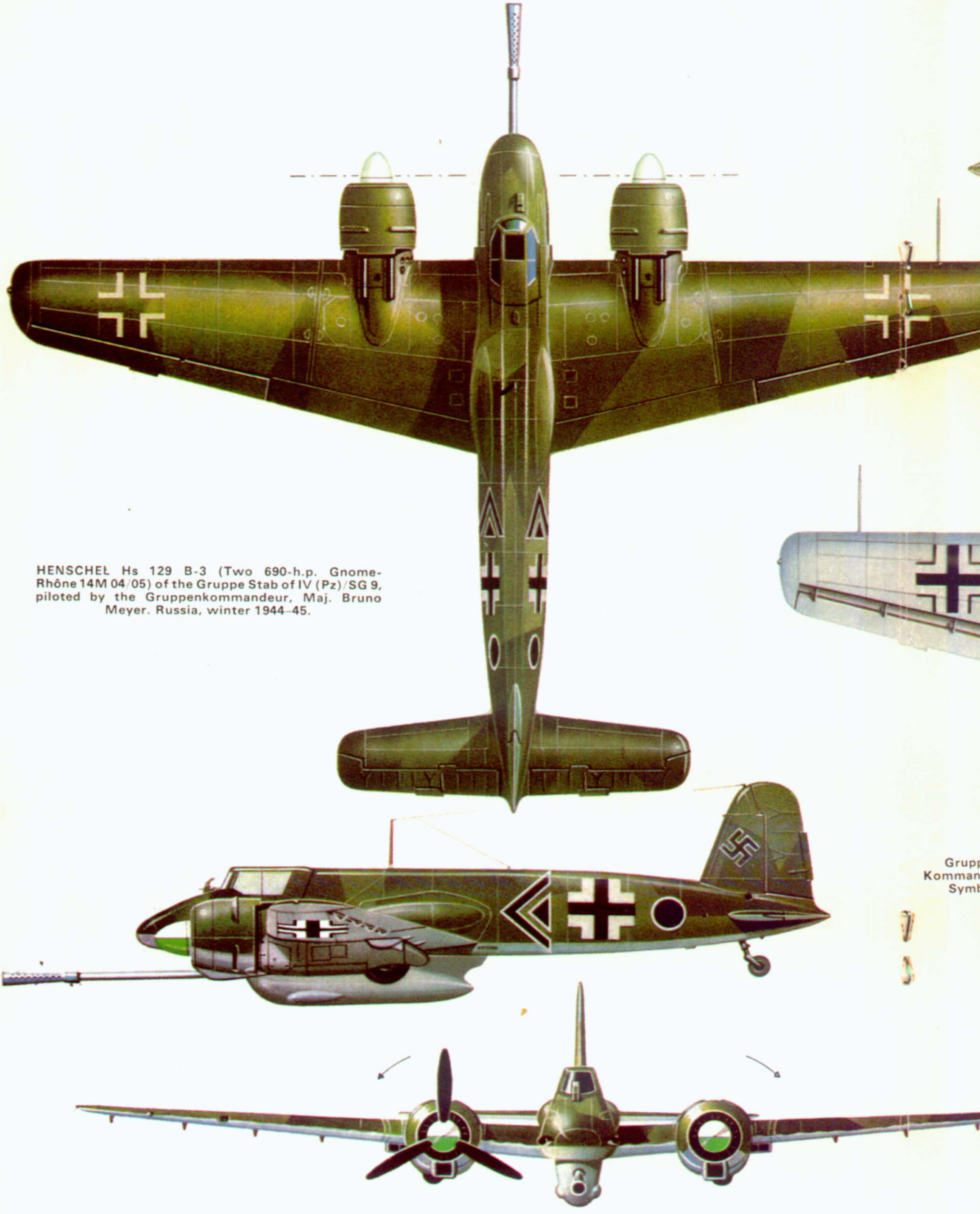
Russian-occupied territory projecting into the German lines. Most of the *Panzer* Divisions on the Eastern Front were concentrated in the area including the new Pz.Kw. V "Panther" and Pz.Kw. VI "Tiger" tanks, the plan being to cut off the Russian forces with a classic pincer movement. On 8th July, the four Hs 129 *Staffeln* based about thirteen miles west-nor-west of Charkow completely repulsed a Russian surprise attack in the strength of an armoured brigade. The Russian attack was directed against the rear flank of the II *SS.Panzerkorps* under Gen. Husser, part of IV *Panzer Armee*.

The four *Staffeln*, each with sixteen Hs 129s, attacked in relays. Thus, whilst one *Staffel* was actually attacking the tanks, two more spaced at intervals were approaching the target, whilst another was returning to re-fuel and re-arm. The attacks were directed at the sides and rear of the tanks where the armour was thinnest, and most of the tanks were destroyed. During Operation Citadel 37,421 *Luftwaffe* sorties were flown in all, and 1,735 enemy aircraft were destroyed for the loss of 64. Twenty thousand tons of bombs were dropped and I *Fliegerkorps* units destroyed 1,100 tanks and 1,300 vehicles.

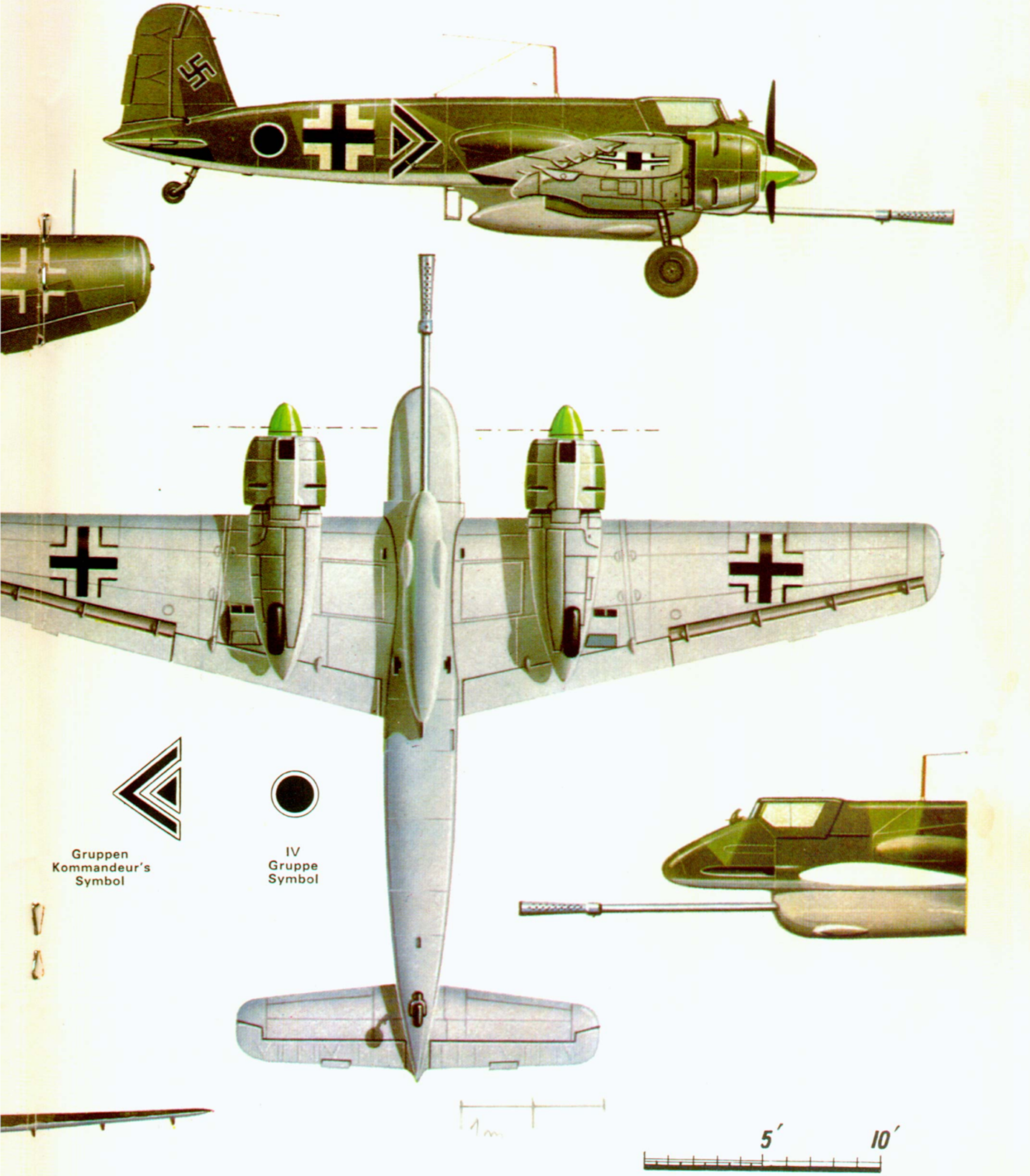
On 10th October 1943 a wholesale redesignation took place amongst the *Luftwaffe*'s ground-attack formations, the *Stukageschwader* being re-named as *Schlachtgeschwader* and the old Sch.G 1, Sch.G 2 and SKG 10 being re-organised into the new SG 4, SG 9 and SG 10. The five Hs 129 *Staffeln* plus the *Führer der Panzer Jäger* were combined to form IV (*Panzer*) *Gruppe*/SG 9 as follows:

Führer der Panzer Jäger	became	IV (*Pz*)*Gruppe Stab*/SG 9
4 *Staffel*/Sch.G 1	became	10 (*Pz*)*Staffel*/SG9
8 *Staffel*/Sch.G 1	became	11 (*Pz*)*Staffel*/SG9
4 *Staffel*/Sch.G 2	became	12 (*Pz*)*Staffel*/SG 9
8 *Staffel*/Sch.G 2	became	13 (*Pz*)*Staffel*/SG 9
Panzer Jäger Staffel/JG 51	became	14 (*Pz*)*Staffel*/SG 9

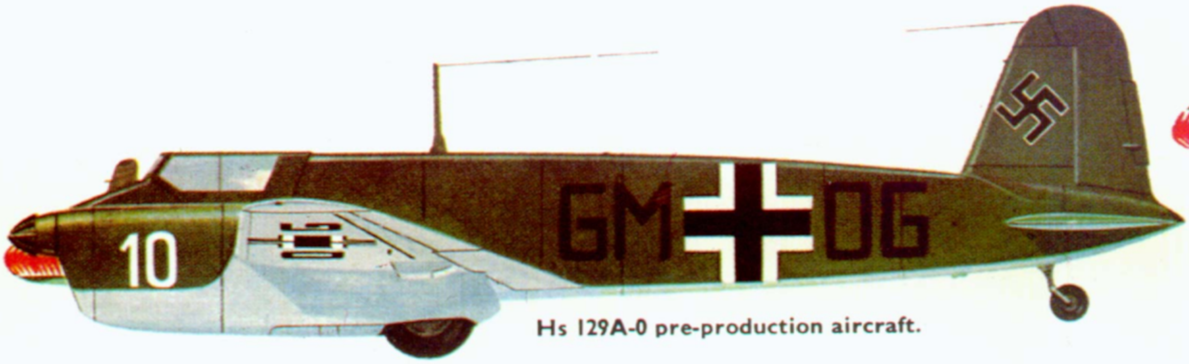
A Henschel pilot prepares for a sortie in Russia. Note the massive construction of the cockpit, a self-contained unit composed almost entirely of armour plate. (Photo: R. C. Seeley collection)


Grupp
Komman
Symb

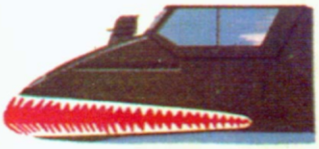
HENSCHEL Hs 129 B-3 (Two 690-h.p. Gnome-Rhône 14M 04/05) of the Gruppe Stab of IV (Pz)/SG 9, piloted by the Gruppenkommandeur, Maj. Bruno Meyer. Russia, winter 1944–45.


Gruppen Kommandeur's Symbol
IV Gruppe Symbol
1m
5'
10'

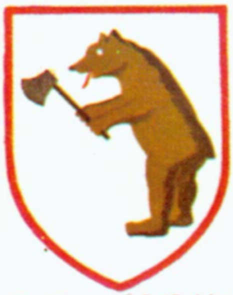
1 ft = 12 cal   1 ft = 30,48 cm   1 cal = 2,54 cm



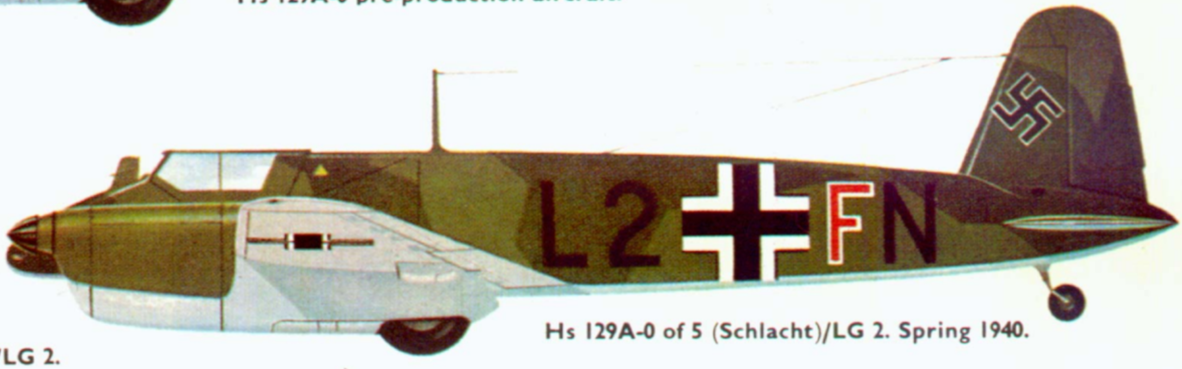
Hs 129A-0 pre-production aircraft.



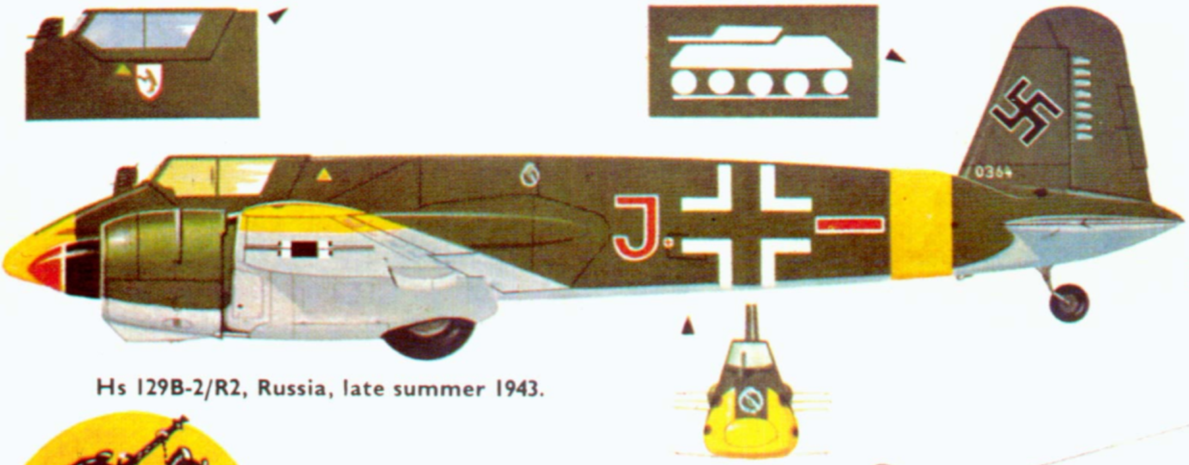
Sharkmouth detail.



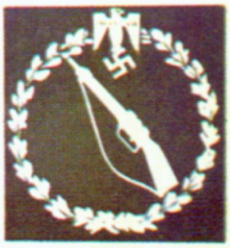
Emblem of 5 (Schlacht)/LG 2.



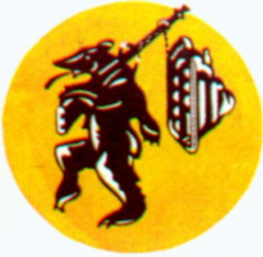
Hs 129A-0 of 5 (Schlacht)/LG 2. Spring 1940.



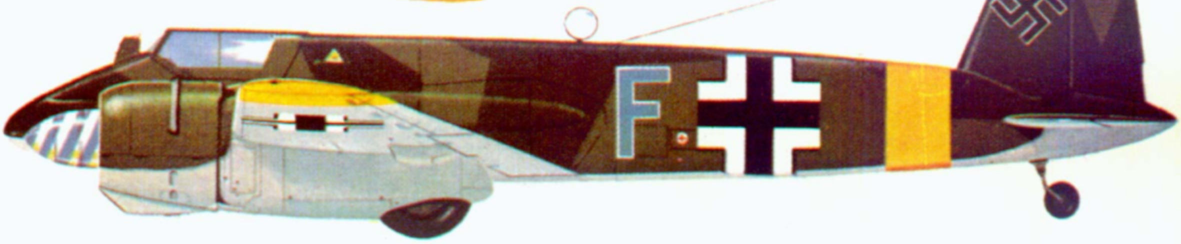
Hs 129B-2/R2, Russia, late summer 1943.



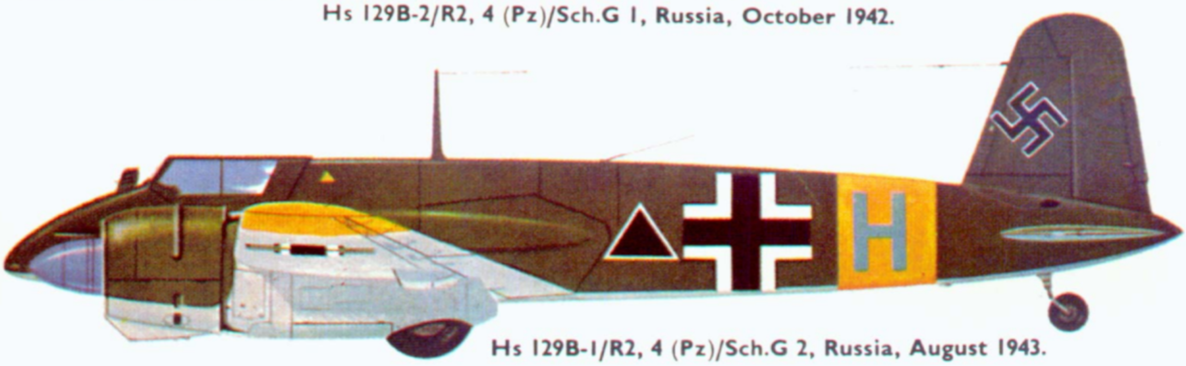
Infantry assault badge.



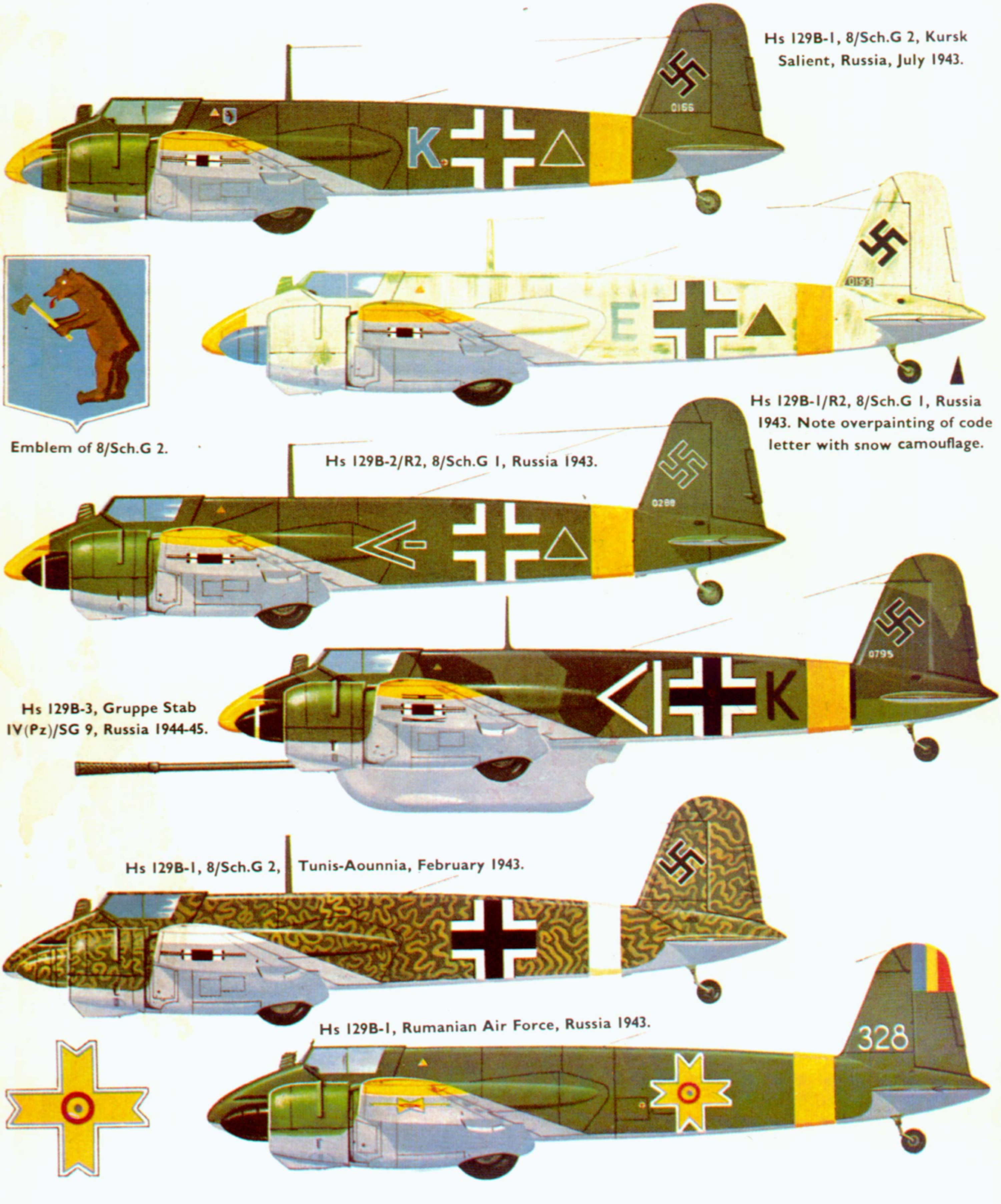
Emblem of 4 (Pz)/Sch.G 1.



Hs 129B-2/R2, 4 (Pz)/Sch.G 1, Russia, October 1942.



Hs 129B-1/R2, 4 (Pz)/Sch.G 2, Russia, August 1943.



Hs 129B-1, 8/Sch.G 2, Kursk Salient, Russia, July 1943.

Emblem of 8/Sch.G 2.

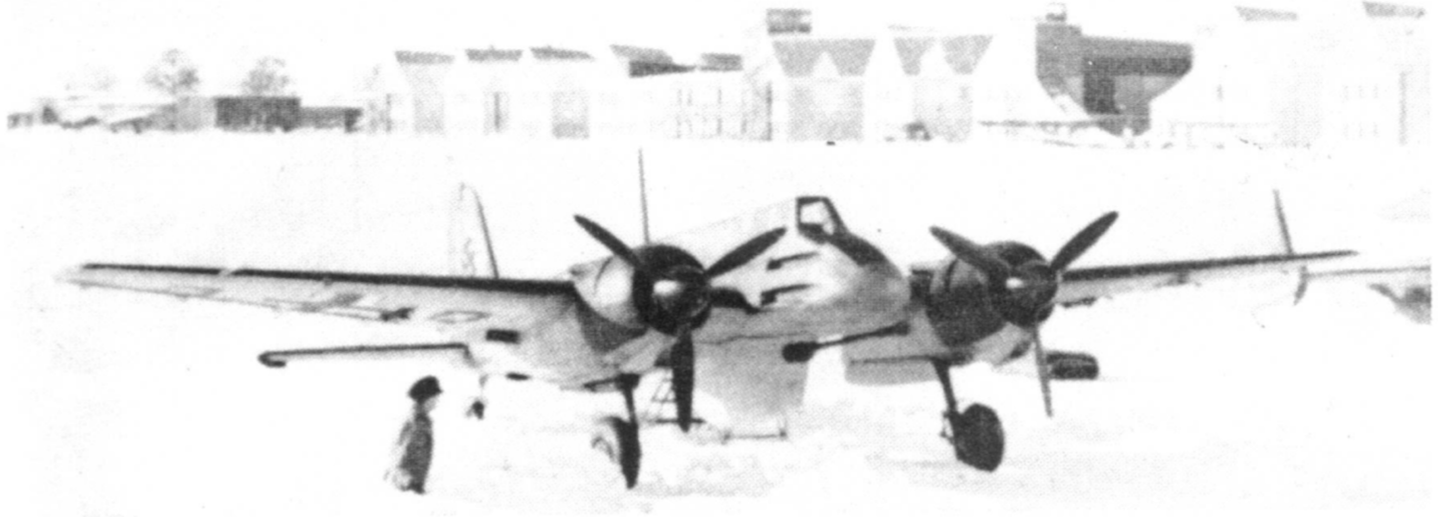
Hs 129B-1/R2, 8/Sch.G 1, Russia 1943. Note overpainting of code letter with snow camouflage.

Hs 129B-2/R2, 8/Sch.G 1, Russia 1943.

Hs 129B-3, Gruppe Stab IV(Pz)/SG 9, Russia 1944-45.

Hs 129B-1, 8/Sch.G 2, Tunis-Aounnia, February 1943.

Hs 129B-1, Rumanian Air Force, Russia 1943.



Hs 129B-2 with test installation, probably of BK 5 cannon. This machine is believed to have been photographed at the Travemünde experimental establishment; note hangars camouflaged as private houses in background. (Photo: R. C. Seeley collection)

The *Gruppe* (the only such ever to have had five *Staffeln*) was put under the command of Hptm. (later Major) Bruno Meyer and was allowed to roam freely within *Luftflotten* 4 and 6 territory, striking at Russian tank formations as they concentrated. On 20th October 1943, 11(Pz)/SG 9 was withdrawn from operations and transferred to Udetfield for training. Finally it was redesignated *Erprobungskommando* 26 on 20th January 1944, this last mentioned unit experimenting with various weapon systems for use by the Hs 129.

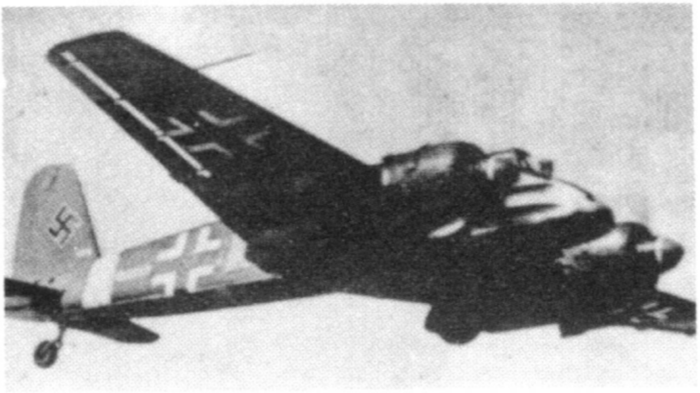
THE HENSCHEL Hs 129 B-2 SERIES

The Russians began to use their excellent KV and T-34 tanks in larger numbers from the end of 1942; until then they had only been used in "penny packets" to support infantry divisions. Tank battalions comprising about 65 vehicles were formed and these created severe problems for the German *Panzer* Divisions. The KV-1 had a 76-mm. gun and 75-mm. plate and the T-34 the same calibre gun but only 45-mm. armour, although the latter was somewhat better distributed. Both were able to withstand the 30-mm. MK 101 cannon shells of the Hs 129 B-1/R2; in fact, difficulty was experienced in penetrating the vehicles' frontal armour even with the 50-mm. gun of the Pz.Kw. III and the 75-mm. gun of the Pz.Kw. IV tanks.

Tests were therefore carried out with new weapons for the Hs 129, the 30-mm. MK 103 (an MK 101 with much increased muzzle velocity), the 37-mm. BK 3·7 and the 50-mm. BK 5 guns being installed for trials. These tests resulted in the introduction of a new production series, designated Hs 129 B-2, which were often purely gun carriers, the racks being deleted. Before the introduction of this sub-type, the Hs 129 B-1 was equipped with 9-lb. SD-4 bombs which had a hollow charge warhead and were capable of penetrating the armour of the Russian tanks. These were used operationally pending the introduction of the improved Hs 129 B-2.

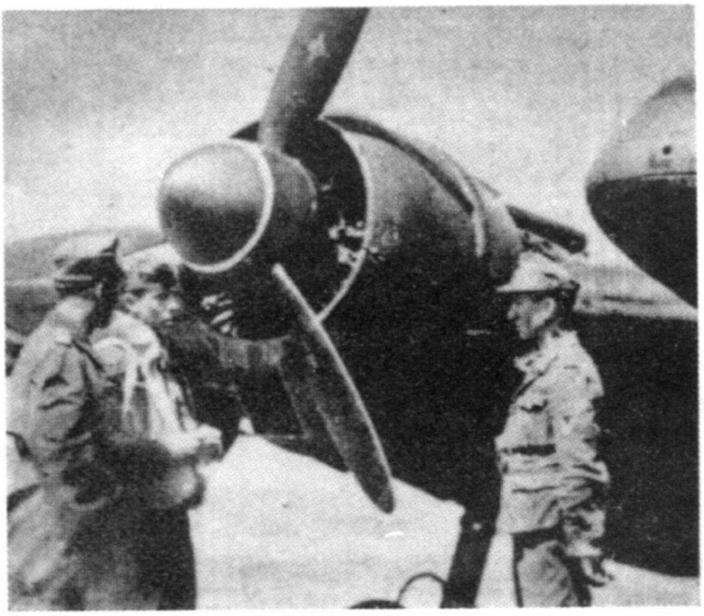
Four sub-series of the Hs 129 B-2 were proposed, the first being the Hs 129 B-2/R1 which besides having no bomb racks, had the 7·9 mm. MG 17 machine-guns replaced by two 13-mm. MG 131 weapons. The Hs 129 B-2/R2 had a 30-mm. MK 103 cannon in an underfuselage mounting, this in addition to the standard built-in armament. The Hs 129 B-2/R3 carried a 37-mm. BK 3·7 anti-tank gun under the fuselage, but the two MG 131s were deleted.

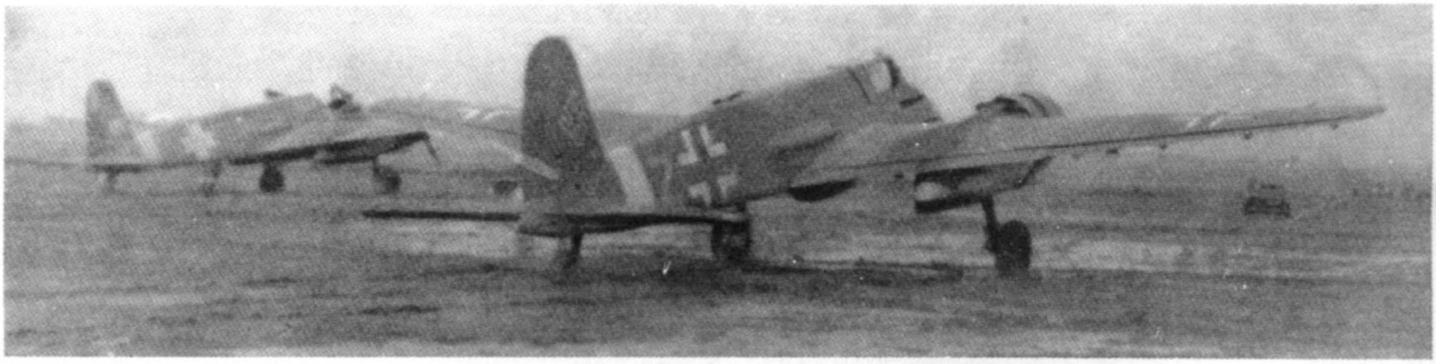
Most interesting Hs 129 B-2 variant was the Hs 129 B-2/R4. This was an experimental model fitted with a 75-mm. PaK 40 gun which was originally designed as



Hs 129B-2 in flight.

Hs 129B pilot and ground crew. The Schlachtgeschwader *personnel probably played a greater part in the Russian campaigns than any other branch of the* Luftwaffe; *the Red Air Force was also a basically tactical arm.*





Luftwaffe *and Rumanian Air Force Hs 129Bs share a Russian airfield during the spring thaw, traditionally a season of renewed effort in the Russian campaigns.* (Photo: R. C. Seeley collection)

a land-based anti-tank weapon. This gun was carried below the fuselage in a large streamlined mounting, this being tested in a wooden mock-up form on a standard Hs 129 B-2 (Wk.Nr.141258) in May 1944 at *Erprobungstelle* (Experimental Station) Travemünde. The aircraft was fitted with wool tufts around the rear fuselage and tail for airflow experiments and was extensively tested. The mounting was much improved over that installed in the Junkers Ju 88 P-1, a feature of the latter being the ejection of the exhaust gases to either side of the mounting, this interfering with the plane of the airscrews. In the Hs 129 mounting, the gases were ejected rearwards which proved a much more satisfactory arrangement.

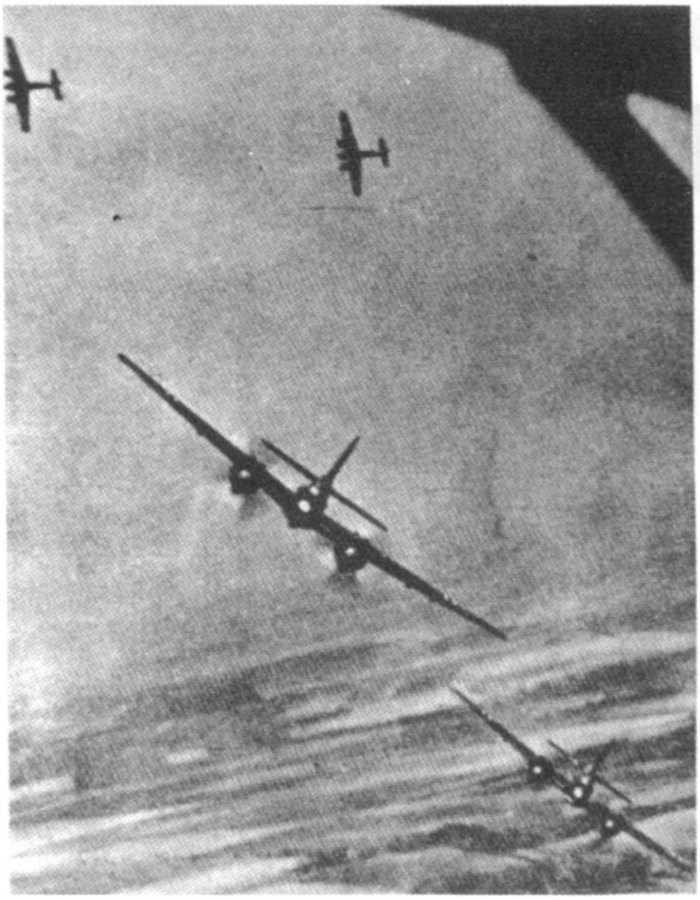
Following the successful testing of the Hs 129 B-2/R4, a production model designated Hs 129 B-3 was built in June 1944. This differed in having the 75-mm. BK 7·5 gun, which was similar to the PaK 40 except in that it was electro-pneumatically instead of mechanically operated. The gun was about 20-feet long and could carry twelve rounds, each weighing 26 lb.; the intervals between shots being 1½ seconds. The recoil distance of the barrel was some 36 inches, and this combined with the flash must have made a somewhat alarming impression on the pilot when the gun was fired! The whole mounting was jettisonable in an emergency, thus enabling the pilot to retain control of the aircraft with one engine out of action.

The first three Hs 129 B-3s (Wk.Nrs.162033, 162034 and 162035) were delivered to *Erprobungskommando* 26 at Tarnewitz in early August 1944 for tests. These were completed by September and about twenty-five Hs 129 B-3s were built at Henschel's Schönefeld factory. These aircraft were delivered to 10 and 14 (Pz)/SG 9 in the winter of 1944–45 and were operated successfully, even against the giant "Josef Stalin" tank, until lack of fuel virtually grounded the *Luftwaffe* in March 1945. By January 1945, IV(Pz)/SG 9 was reduced to two *Staffeln*, but another *Gruppe*, I(Pz)/SG 9 had been formed in that month, its 1st *Staffel* being re-named from 12(Pz)/SG 9. 2/SG 9 was formed from 10(Pz)/SG 1 and 3/SG 9 was formed from 10(Pz)/SG 3. I *Gruppe* of SG 9, although originally having a few Ju 87 G-1s on hand, was eventually to re-equip wholly with the rocket-firing Fw 190 F-8.

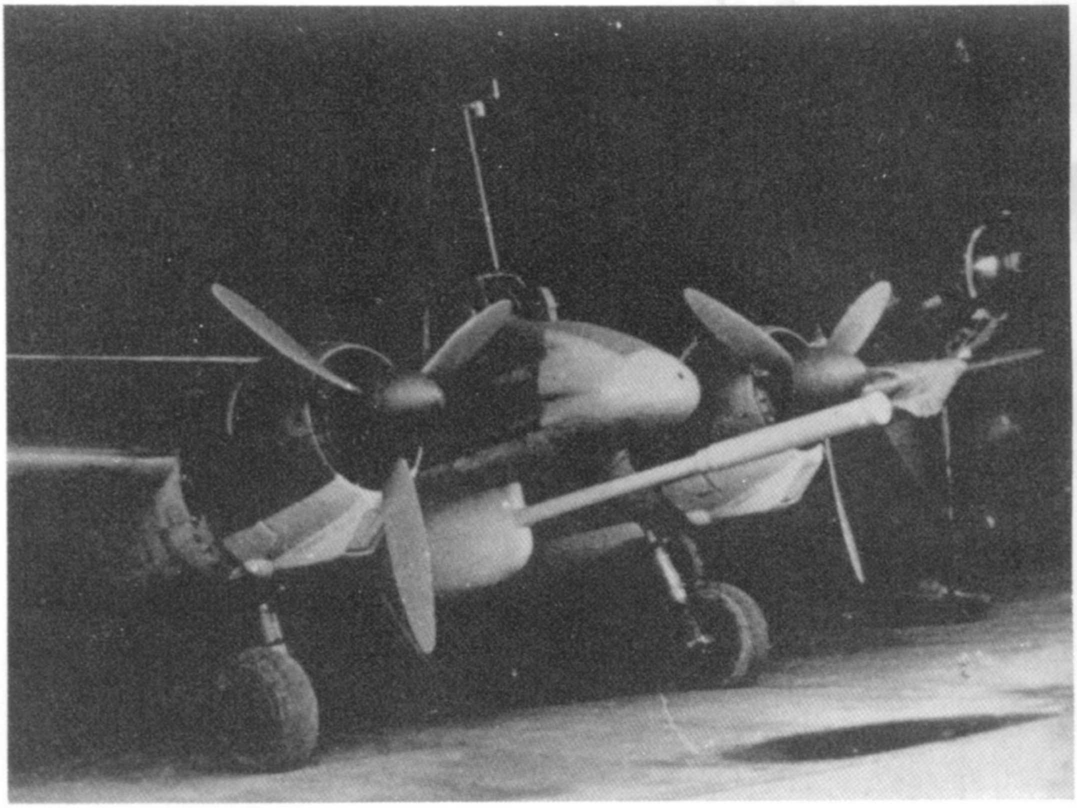
Many other interesting armaments were tested on the Henschel 129, one of the most fascinating, and potentially the most effective being the SG 113 A (*Sondergeräte* 113 A) *Förstersonde* rocket mortar. Three Hs 129s were fitted with these advanced weapons, each of which comprised six single-barrelled mortars in a rhomboid-shaped mounting. The SG 113 A could fire six 77-mm. Sabot-type shells vertically downwards, the weapon being triggered by a photo-electric cell actuated by the shadow of an enemy tank. The shell comprised a 77-mm. soft metal jacket, which, after leaving the barrel, was discarded leaving a hard 45-mm. core. This type of missile gave a much higher armour-piercing capacity than that of a conventional shell, but there are no records of the weapon being used operationally.

In the early months of 1944, it was becoming increasingly obvious that the Allies would soon attempt an invasion of Europe. Several *Lüftwaffe* units were withdrawn from Russia and Italy to strengthen the German forces in Western Europe, and some *Ergänzungsgruppen* (Training and Replacement Groups)

A Henschel schwarm *at altitude over Russia breaks formation into two sections. Although the quality of this wartime photograph is low, it is noteworthy as one of the few surviving views of Henschels in formation.*



Hs 129B-2, W. Nr. 141258, fitted with a wooden mock-up of the 75-mm. PaK 40 cannon for tests at Travemünde in May 1944. Production B-3 models were in fact fitted with the BK 7.5 cannon, similar to the PaK 40 but with electro-pneumatic rather than mechanical operation.
(Photo: *Gruppe* 66 Archives)



were temporarily made operational. Amongst the latter was an Hs 129 unit, almost certainly a *Staffel* of III/SG 151. This formation, which was based at Caen-Carpiquet, appeared over the Allied bridgeheads after D-Day on reconnaissance duties. One aircraft was captured by the R.A.F. during the last week in July 1944 from Caen airfield, but its subsequent fate is not recorded.

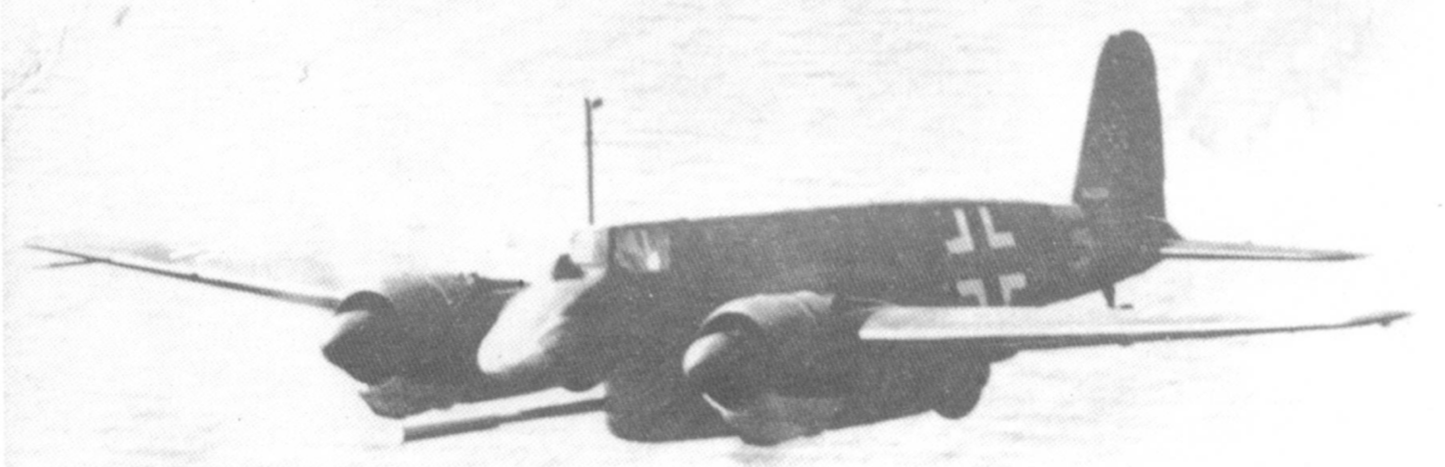
By the middle of 1944, with the improvement in Russia's fighter and anti-aircraft defences, it became obvious that the Hs 129's performance was far from adequate. Pilot losses of 20 per cent were being experienced, and it was proving almost impossible to keep the *Schlachtgeschwader* fully manned and equipped. Several advanced studies were made involving the aircraft, but although the airframe itself was excellent, it was not capable of utilising really powerful engines which would have much improved its performance. One of the most interesting studies was for fitting the aircraft with two 900-h.p. Isotta-Fraschini Delta engines, the project receiving the designation Hs 129 C. The proposed production model, the Hs 129 C-1, was to have been fitted with two 30-mm. MK 103 cannon installed side-by-side, each in a remotely-controlled turret under the fuselage, but only wind tunnel tests were carried out.

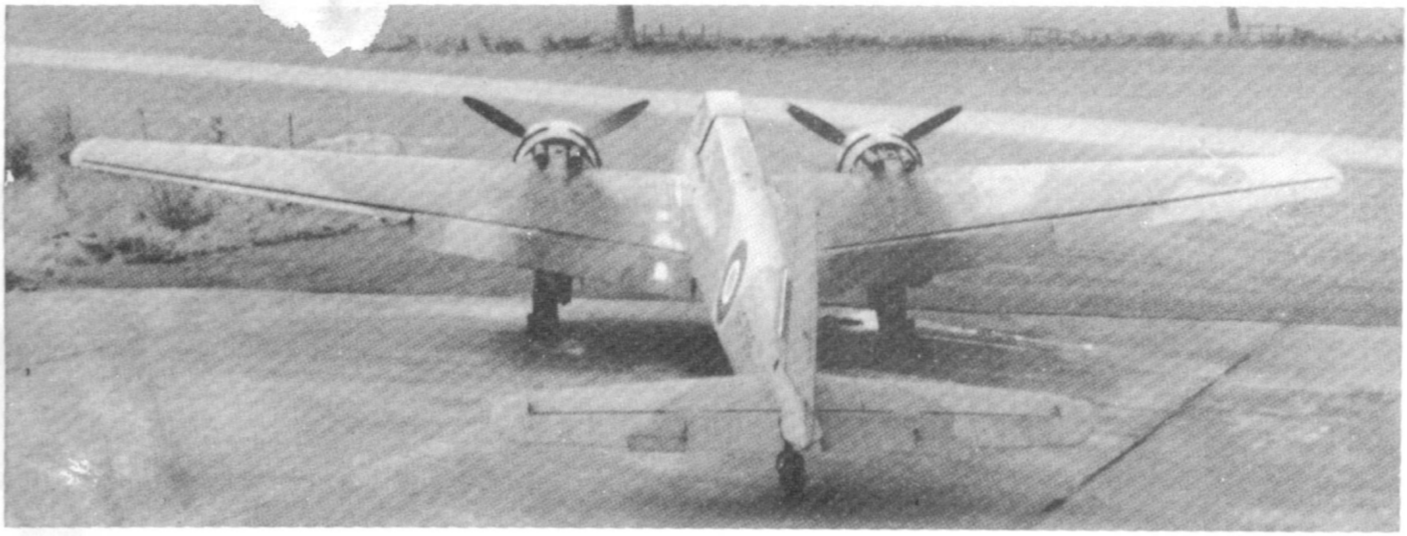
One Hs 129 was fitted with an ejector seat, another was projected with a flame-thrower, whilst yet another project involved the use of the armoured cockpit of the Hs 129 coupled to various other airframes. One of the projects was to have utilised the Junkers Ju 188 airframe powered by two 2,500-h.p. Jumo 222 A engines, whilst another was to have employed the Gotha Go 229 airframe with a 1,750-h.p. Jumo 213 engine installed as a pusher.

CAPTURED MACHINES

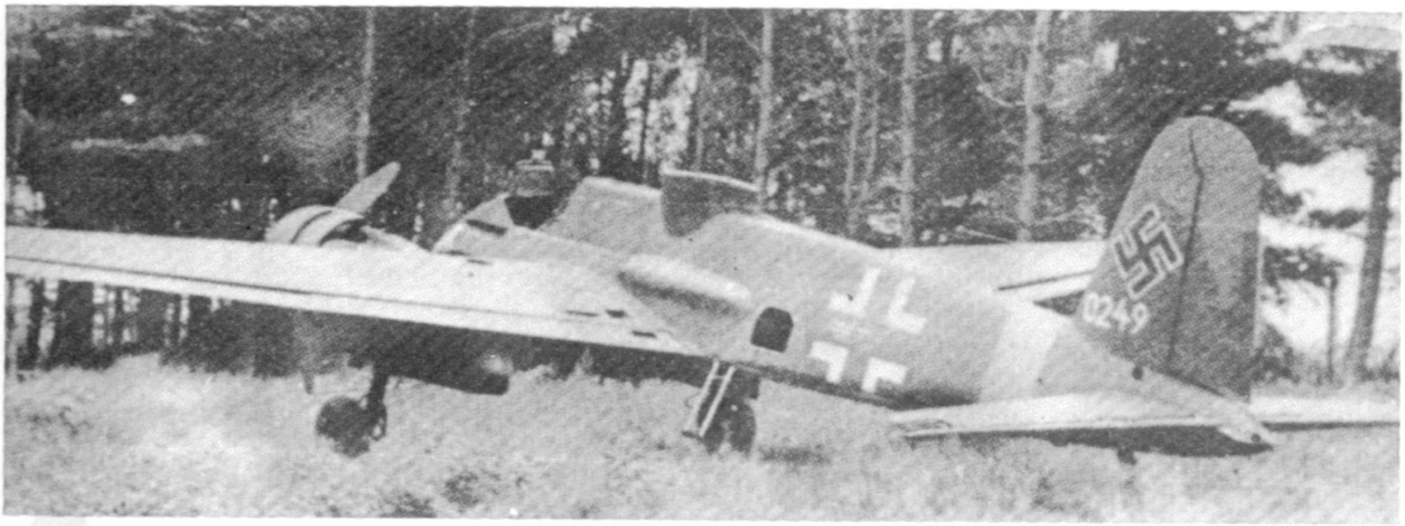
As previously noted, at least two Hs 129s crash-landed behind the Allied lines in the Middle East. One of these aircraft, which had suffered only minor damage, was dismantled and shipped to Great Britain. The first consignment of parts arrived at Collyweston on 27th June 1943, the aircraft being delivered to No. 1426 Flight. This Flight was a special unit formed to

W. Nr. 141258 in flight over the Baltic during the Travemünde test programme. (Photo: *Gruppe* 66 Archives)



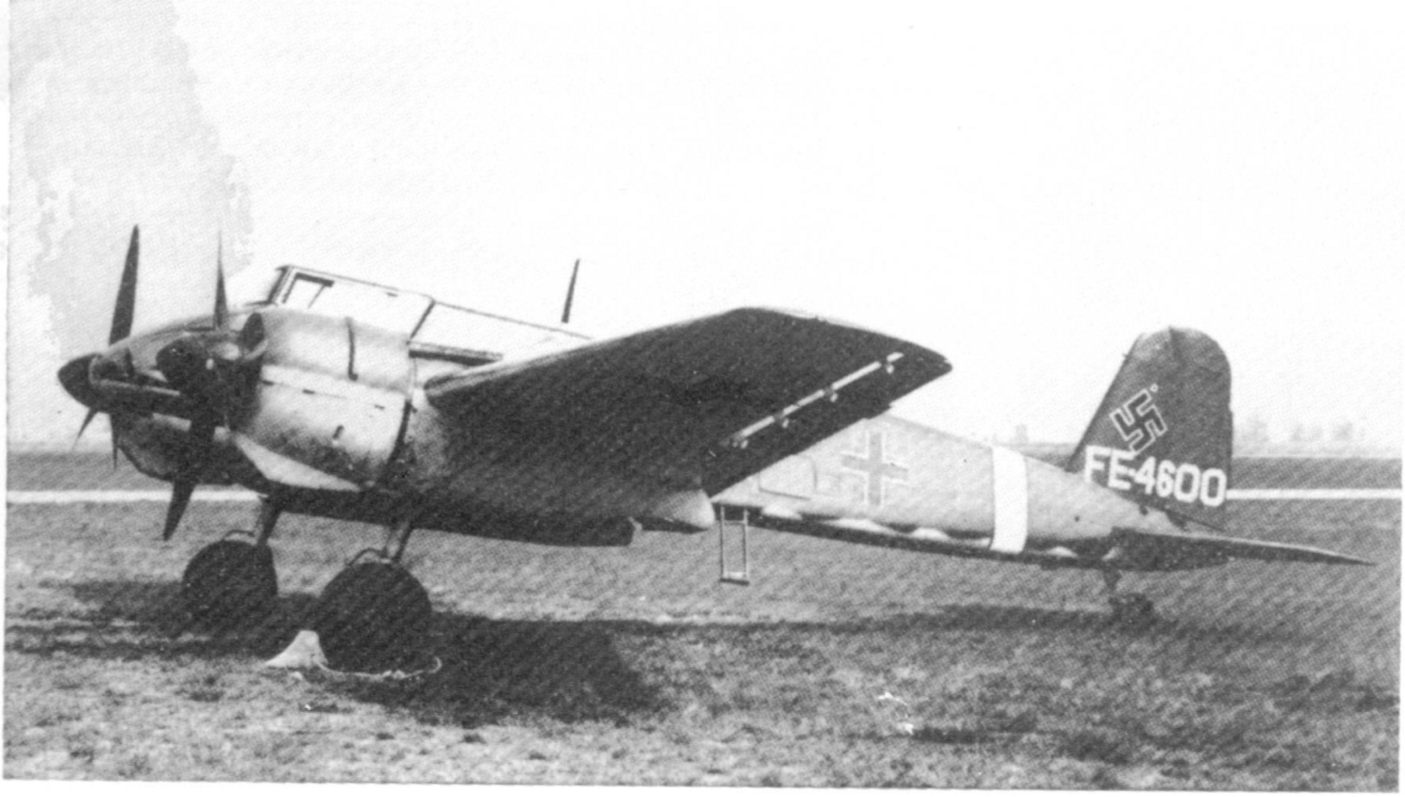


Rear view of the captured Hs 129B-1 (NF 756) *during its use by No. 1426 Flight, Royal Air Force.* (Photo: Imperial War Museum)

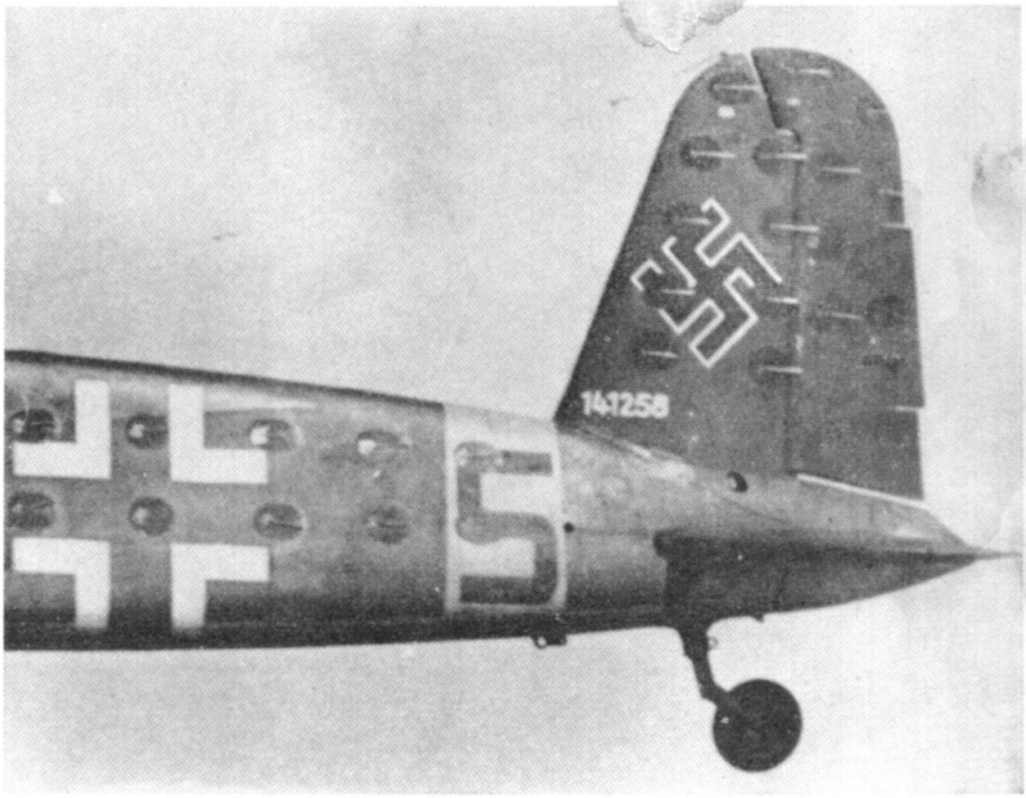


W. Nr. 0249, one of the three B-2 models experimentally fitted with the 77-mm. SG 113A recoil-less rocket mortar. The rhomboid-shaped mounting can be seen protruding from the fuselage spine. (Photo: *Gruppe* 66 Archives)

Hs 129 tested by the U.S.A.A.F. at Freeman Field; note that the German markings are spurious. (Photo: Imperial War Museum)



Rear fuselage and tail of 141258, showing wool-tufting employed during airflow tests. (Photo: *Gruppe* 66 Archives)

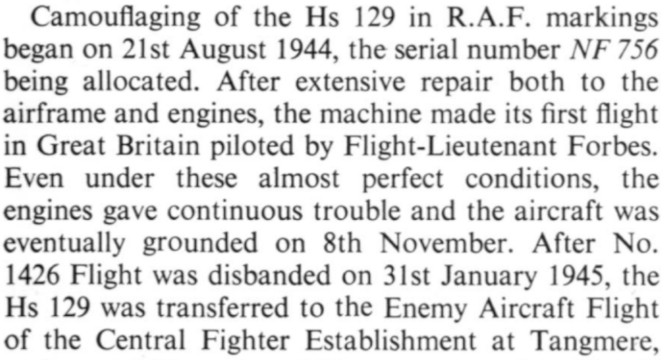


fly captured enemy aircraft around the country for fighter-liaison and aircraft recognition purposes. Besides the Hs 129 B-1, the Flight was equipped with a Junkers Ju 88 A-6, a Messerschmitt Bf 109 G-2 (the machine which was recently refurbished at Wattisham), a Bf 110 C-4 and a Focke-Wulf Fw 190 A-4.

Camouflaging of the Hs 129 in R.A.F. markings began on 21st August 1944, the serial number *NF 756* being allocated. After extensive repair both to the airframe and engines, the machine made its first flight in Great Britain piloted by Flight-Lieutenant Forbes. Even under these almost perfect conditions, the engines gave continuous trouble and the aircraft was eventually grounded on 8th November. After No. 1426 Flight was disbanded on 31st January 1945, the Hs 129 was transferred to the Enemy Aircraft Flight of the Central Fighter Establishment at Tangmere, and on 1st November 1945 was conveyed to No. 47 Maintenance Unit at Sealand for storage.

Besides *NF 756*, several other Hs 129s were captured and flown by the Allies. One machine was shipped to the United States and test flown at Freeman Field in company with many other captured enemy aircraft. The machine received the special field evaluation number *FE-4600*, but its subsequent fate has not been recorded. A number of Hs 129s were captured and flown in the Soviet Union, one machine being exhibited in a display of captured German aircraft held in Moscow towards the end of 1943. Also included were a He 111 F (used as a transport during the Stalingrad airlift), a He 111 H, a Ju 88 A and a Bf 109 G.

Close-up of blast troughs and Revi sight. (Photo: R. C. Seeley collection)



GROUND-ATTACK UNITS

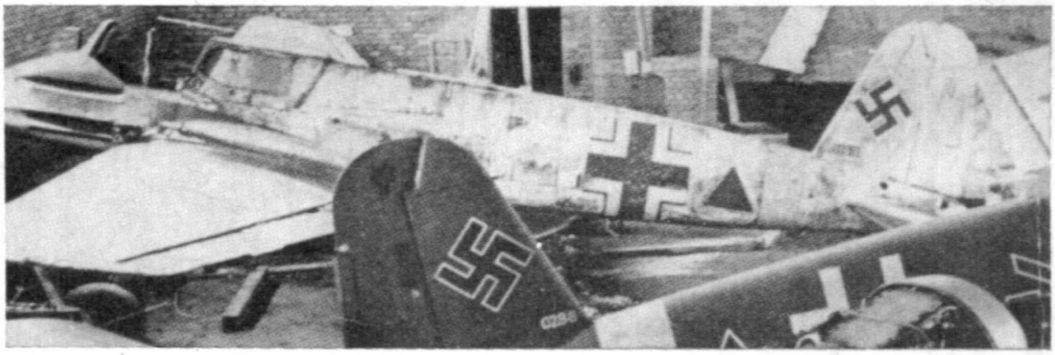
The basic *Luftwaffe* unit was the *Geschwader* or wing which had a nominal strength of 100–150 aircraft depending on availability of aircraft. There were two separate formations of the *Schlachtgeschwader* or ground-attack wings—the first being distinguished by the abbreviation "Sch.G"; the second utilising the letters "SG". The first *Schlachtgeschwader* (Sch.G 1 and Sch.G 2) comprised a *Geschwader Stab* or headquarters flight and two *Gruppen.* Each *Gruppe* was sub-divided into four *Staffeln* plus the *Gruppe Stab.* The *Geschwader* and *Staffeln* were identified by an Arabic number, the *Gruppen* being distinguished by a Roman numeral. The second *Schlachtgeschwader* were formed on 10th October 1943 by re-naming the old *Stukageschwader* as *Schlachtgeschwader*, and re-forming Sch.G 1, Sch.G 2 and SKG 10 into SG 4, SG 9 and SG 10.

The first *Schlachtgeschwader* utilised a black equilateral triangle and a letter (one positioned forward and one aft of the fuselage cross) as their identification markings. If the triangle was painted forward of the cross, the aircraft belonged to I *Gruppe*, if it appeared aft, the machine belonged to II *Gruppe*. The individual letter was painted in the *Staffel* colour, these being as follows:

1 *Staffel* I *Gruppe* and 5 *Staffel* II *Gruppe*	White
2 *Staffel* I *Gruppe* and 6 *Staffel* II *Gruppe*	Red
3 *Staffel* I *Gruppe* and 7 *Staffel* II *Gruppe*	Yellow
4 *Staffel* I *Gruppe* and 8 *Staffel* II *Gruppe*	Blue

The second *Schlachtgeschwader* (with the exception of the Ju 87 equipped formations) utilised a similar

Semi-dismantled Henschels captured in Russia by advancing Soviet forces. The Hs 129 was probably the most effective tank-buster in the German armoury in the East; and during the Kursk fighting four Staffeln *broke up and repulsed a Soviet armoured thrust in brigade strength.* (Photo: Imperial War Museum)



system of markings to the *Jagdgeschwader*, except that a letter was substituted for a number. The letter was painted in the *Staffel* colour as follows:

1 *Staffel* I *Gruppe*	White
2 *Staffel* I *Gruppe*	Red
3 *Staffel* I *Gruppe*	Yellow
4 *Staffel* II *Gruppe*	White
5 *Staffel* II *Gruppe*	Red
6 *Staffel* II *Gruppe*	Yellow
7 *Staffel* III *Gruppe*	White
8 *Staffel* III *Gruppe*	Red
9 *Staffel* III *Gruppe*	Yellow

The *Gruppen* were distinguished by a symbol painted aft of the cross and applied either in the *Staffel* colour or in black. These symbols were as follows:

I *Gruppe* = No symbol.
II *Gruppe* = A Horizontal Bar.
III *Gruppe* = A Vertical Bar.
IV *Gruppe* = A Solid Circle.

The *Geschwader* and *Gruppe Stabs'* aircraft employed a system of chevrons, circles, and bars similar to that employed by the *Jagdgeschwader*.

PRODUCTION OF THE HS 129 B

	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944
January	—	—	3	24	30
February	—	—	3	27	25
March	—	—	6	30	35
April	—	—	31	33	35
May	—	—	18	36	35
June	—	—	18	40	27
July	—	—	20	40	18
August	—	—	24	40	3
September	7	—	15	40	17
October		—	33	40	—
November		—	24	40	—
December	—	1	24	24	—
TOTALS	7	1	219	414	225

Total production of the Hs 129 B was 866 machines.

SPECIFICATION

Henschel Hs 129 B-1/R2

Dimensions

Span 46 ft. 7 in.; length 31 ft. 11¾ in.; height 10 ft. 8 in.; wing area 312 sq. ft.

Powerplants

Two Gnome et Rhône 14M 04/05 fourteen-cylinder two-row air-cooled radial engines each rated at 740 h.p. for take-off and each driving a three-bladed Ratier electrically operated constant-speed airscrew.

Armament

Two 7·9-mm. MG 17 machine guns and two 20-mm. MG 151/20 cannon mounted internally and firing forward and one 30-mm. MK 101 cannon with 30 r.p.g. mounted under the fuselage centre section.

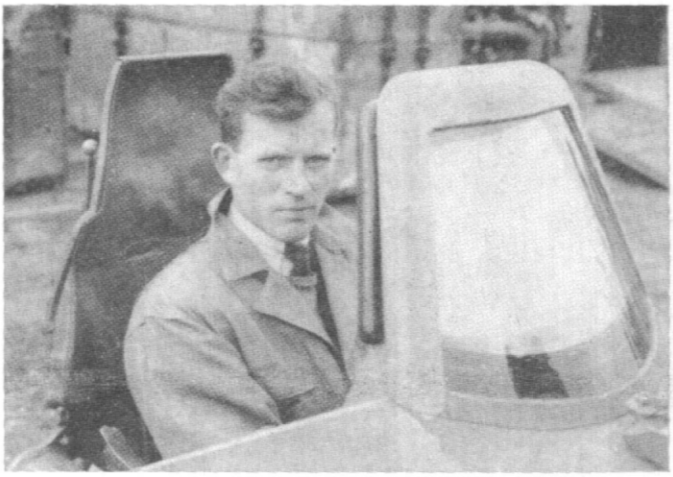
Weights

Empty 8,785 lb. Loaded 11,266 lb.

Performance

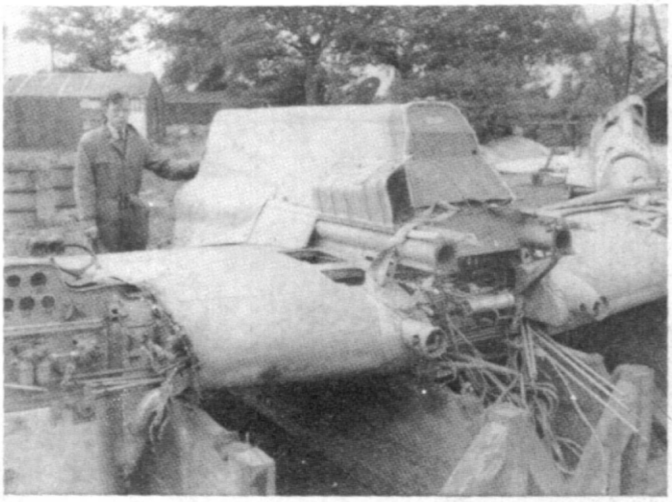
Maximum speed 253 m.p.h. at 12,500 ft. (Maximum speed of the Hs 129 A-0 was 220 m.p.h., maximum speed of the Hs 129 B-3 was 199 m.p.h., both figures being rated at sea level.) Normal range 348 miles. Climb 7 minutes to 10,000 ft. Service ceiling 29,530 ft.

(*The Author and Publishers would like to thank Mr. Peter Moss for supplying data on the Hs 129 captured by the R.A.F. and Herr Fritz Hahn for his informative comments on the various weapons mentioned. The assistance given by officials of "Gruppe 66" during the preparation of this* Profile *was also invaluable.*)



The considerable pilot protection afforded by the Henschel's armoured cockpit is demonstrated in this view of a captured machine under examination by an Air Ministry Intelligence unit in July 1943. In the cockpit, Peter Endsleigh Castle, Profile *illustrator and creator of the five-aspect painting; Mr. Castle was at that time an official of the technical intelligence unit.* (Photo: P. E. Castle)

Another view of the dismantled Henschel shows the blast tubes for the nose guns, and the massive strength of the centre-section. (Photo: P. E. Castle)



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